

Digital technologies in Wales

In our latest post, Dr Dylan Henderson reflects on the final event of the Superfast Broadband Business Exploitation project, which took place online between from 2-3 December 2020.

Digital technologies have been identified at the heart of the current [wave of social and economic development](#). Technologies such as cloud computing services, ecommerce tools, sensors and robotics are said to be [transforming](#) business processes, relationships between businesses, and products and services. Underpinned by the emergence of high-speed broadband networks such technologies are applicable to a broad range of service and manufacturing businesses, enabling new forms of business activity, but also disrupting traditional ways of doing things.

In Wales, as in other regions, the use of digital technologies has been seen as one way in which the longstanding productivity challenges to the Welsh economy could be [addressed](#). Their importance has been further highlighted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, where adoption and use of digital technologies has [increased](#).

“The availability and use of these technologies, has helped to support the resilience of businesses during this period, with calls to build this further to support economic recovery [post pandemic](#).”

Despite recognition of the transformative potential of digital technologies there has traditionally been little data available on how SMEs adopt and use digital technologies in Wales. To address this, our team at Cardiff Business School’s [Welsh Economy Research Unit \(WERU\)](#) has conducted annual surveys of [digital maturity in Wales](#). Since 2017, we’ve calculated the [economic impact](#) of digitalisation in the Welsh economy. Our research has revealed the continuing digitalisation of Welsh SMEs, but also the remaining challenges to ensure that it’s spread across all sectors and areas of Wales.

Funding for the research is due to conclude at the end of 2020. So, to take stock of our findings and to consider how business support and policy may be able to further address Wales’ digital challenges, we hosted an online event earlier in December.

‘Digital technologies in Wales – economic impacts & policy in turbulent times’ comprised two digital seminars.

Chaired by [Professor Max Munday](#), the first session saw WERU colleagues [Laura Norris](#) and [Dr Laura Reynolds](#) present findings from our digital maturity survey research and [Professor Pete Burnap](#) from Cardiff University’s School of Computer Science and Informatics talk about business support available with the University’s [Data Innovation Accelerator](#).

These academic contributions were complemented by [Lee Waters MS](#), the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, and David Marnell, who spoke about Welsh Government’s Digital Strategy and [Superfast Business Wales](#) programme.

[embed YouTube film of session 1]

 [Session 1 – Research findings Business Support.mp4](#)

The second session examined policy implications for Wales. Chaired by Professor Tony Davies, Emeritus Professor Cardiff Business School, attendees heard presentations from Michael Groves, from Welsh Government, [Professor Phillip Brown](#), based at Cardiff University’s School of Social Sciences and author of the [Review of digital innovation: delivering economic transformation for a](#)

[better future of work](#), Giles Phelps, founder of Netsupport UK and Wayne Phillips, Partner Manager at Amazon Web Services.

[embed YouTube film of session 2]

 [Session 2 - Policy challenges and implications .mp4](#)

So, what next?

Well, the Welsh Economic Research Unit team recognise the importance of continuing to examine future digital adoption trends in Wales and their impacts on the economy, and the potential for such data to inform policy decisions.

To this end we're working with partners to explore continuation plans and hope to continue our surveying in 2021.

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